

A. The Dwelling

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The dwelling arrangements form a considerable part of the material culture of the Yamana people and are in perfect accord with their roving, hunting life. The dwelling need offer only transitory shelter, for a single night or for a few days. If, for good reasons, it is advisable to remain longer at the same place, the ordinary light, loose construction is made a little more solid, but ordinarily a weak frame suffices. According to the site, there are two types of huts: the dome-shaped and the cone-shaped (1). Generally it is /368/

1. According to Despard (b) :680, the huts vary with the season. There are "two kinds -- the ashallee, or summer house; and the uocr, or winter house" /cited in English/. The former is supposed to be built with a few poles; "the uocr is more carefully prepared and much larger" /cited in English/. This assertion is inaccurate, for the huts have the same form in summer as in winter. Later Bridges (VP: III, 118; 1969) also distinguished "the winter wigwam" from a "summer wigwam" /cited in English/.

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inhabited by a single family (3). A permanent assemblage of many

2. Lovisato (b) :132 distinguishes three forms of huts, according to use and purpose. Apparently he misinterpreted native words and took this division from a long description by Bridges (VP: III, 118; 1969).

families, such as a village settlement, would be totally unusable. All this likewise contributes to the unequivocal characterization of the Yamana dwelling as extremely humble.

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571 The inmates do not bestow noticeable effort or care on their paltry hut, either in building it or while they are living in it, for it serves but a few hours or days for their most urgent requirements for protection against the inclemency of the weather. One must by no means believe that the Indian strives for comfort or agreeable comfort in his hut. No, it serves merely as a meager cover and at the same time to keep the indispensable fire going. Beyond that, the things that Europeans consider necessary in a dwelling would only mean needless expenditure of energy and an unnecessary burden to the Yamana, for he must constantly carry all his belongings along with him. Indeed, he dare not part with them.

1. The Lack of Permanent Settlement

361 Since there is no other way for the natives of Cape Horn to obtain food except by hunting and gathering, all members of the tribe are divided up into individual families, and as such they go forth to hunt for food. Only occasionally a few band together. This manner of obtaining food prohibits a village settlement with many people.

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361 Obtaining food is the chief concern of the man. Distant and sometimes futile journeys are necessary before he approaches rocks on which seals are lying, or reaches cliffs in which cormorants nest, or finds mussel banks where gathering is worthwhile. He always sees himself at the mercy of the arbitrary, eternally restless waves and the constant shifting of winds. Despite the best intentions, despite the greatest exertion and extreme hardship, he cannot guarantee that he will attain his goal, keep on his course, and come back to the place from where his canoe trip started. The incapable dependence on changing weather, which not infrequently hinders any kind of movement for several days, permits neither an ordered grouping of many people nor plans by the hunters to return to a permanent settlement. Anyone staying behind /368/ to wait for food that others were supposed to bring in would too often find himself exposed to starvation (3).

3. These decisive factors have been overlooked by those European critics who, misconstruing the facts, have judged our natives to be backward

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because they do not build fixed dwellings or permanent settlements.

Then, too, closer consideration of the game itself, upon which our Indian is after all dependent, would make the longer so-compact settlements seem inadvisable. The animals change their location quite erratically. If they do favor certain places, they may there only as long as man does not disturb them. Once they have been frightened away, it may be days before they have regained a feeling of security and settle down there again. Assuming, then, that many families wanted to live together on the same spot, this region would surely be cleared of all game within a wide radius, no matter whether it were killed or frightened away. Accordingly, the hunter would be obliged to venture ever farther from his camp in order to find his prey. Quite apart from his previous exertions, his return would be more difficult and more uncertain; those anxiously awaiting him would look for his return with greater worry. Only a short time might pass before a new camp, considerably distant from the previous one, would have to be sought.

With these brief comments, the advantages of freedom of settlement for independent individual families, in contrast to a longer residence of many people in the same place, become convincing. It is true, however, and this should be mentioned at the outset, that many families gather around a stranded whale and thus form a fortuitous settlement of limited duration. This exists, however, only as long as the supply of meat and fat holds out, for even a sea monster of such giant proportions as these largest mammals does not by any means supply unlimited quantities of food. This isolated occasion, besides one or two others of the same nature, proves how unsuitable fixed settlements would be as a permanent arrangement for our natives. It is to the advantage of all that their extensive homeland has few people, so that each individual family has a wide area open to it in all directions where its members can devote themselves undisturbed to food-gathering. Hence, the dwelling of the Yamana, in form as well as in con-struction and location, is a thing of chance. A person on a journey un-derstands for a definite goal at which to land if the weather is good, but sometimes he does not attain it because good booty crosses his path along the way, because he is driven off his course in the pursuit of an animal, or because wind and waves are against him. After all,

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he wants to steer in the direction of a food supply; where /370/ and when something falls into his hands he will stop and land. Accordingly, the landing place determines whether the family will erect only a small protective roof or a cone-shaped hut or the somewhat more elaborate construction of a dome-shaped dwelling. For the latter many long flexible green saplings and thick foliage are needed; for the second type, several short poles suffice; for the first, the few hides which everyone carries along in his canoe are adequate. Whatever external circumstances present, whatever the landing place offers, what at the moment seems most suitable, that is what the Indian chooses and decides to do. Plans far in advance would prove not only impractical for him, but usually also impossible to carry out, and therefore he does not even consider them. As though by way of compensation, however, he has a ready mental agility for making sudden resolves, and this helps him in every situation to make an instantaneous decision.

The greatest contrast to permanent settlements is the very temporary shelter which a sudden impending need teaches him to erect very quickly. Whatever the Indian happens to find, he hurriedly collects and uses to help himself as best he can. One cannot call such provisional contrivances dwellings, since they are meant only to offer cover for brief hours, for example, during a storm or rain, during sunshine, or because of an unconquerable crosscurrent. They are erected in a few minutes and are always arranged according to the local condition (4).

4. It is only with reference to this that the following words are valid: "The Fuegians have several kinds of huts; they vary their constructions according to the nature of the country they are in and according to the length of time they must stay there" /translated from French/ (La Nature: 274).

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Often they crawl under an overhanging rock, into a shallow depression in a rock, or into a flat cave-shaped dip in the ground, using dense brush or coverings of pieces of leather to keep out pouring rain or a sweeping wind. Mostly they are content to use slight, effortless movements of the hands which suffice to keep the fire glowing steadily

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51/ of the natives, however, this hardship does not by any means compare with the unbearable misery that would result from a sojourn under the open sky. Thus, whenever external circumstances demand it, the natives build their hut, even during the severest /380/ storm, making it either more secure and durable as a dome-shaped dwelling or merely providing a light covering with the conical shape.

36/ A family does not always have a choice of location. A sudden change in the weather or an accident will force them to make for shore without delay. In this case they must adjust themselves to the conditions provided by nature, perhaps even make do with a hasty shelter in a cliff. If they are not under pressure, they make a free selection according to the local weather conditions and the characteristics of the landscape (28). In general, however, everyone

22. When the Indian has a choice, he selects a sheltered spot for his hut. This is so generally true that Bove (NM:XVII, 234; 1883) believed he could go by it: "Generally the presence of wigwams indicates a locality sheltered from the cold and the most frequent winds" /cited in English/.

stays on the dry gravel as close as possible to the highest water level. Their own comfort makes this strongly advisable, for all the utensils that a family carries along with them are dragged from the canoe to the hut. Packing and unpacking would be considerably more burdensome if the dwelling were far from the landing place. If they cannot build a hut for themselves, they seek cover and protection behind mounds of earth and low projecting rocks, at the foot of high rock walls, and at the edge of a forest. A hut is never placed deep in the forest because it is too damp there, but they like to stay under the broadest trees, which ward off rain and snowdrifts. If they are planning to remain only one night at a given location, they take a look at the weather to see if it will permit them to camp in a less protected spot. If not, or if they do not expect to travel on for a few days, a certain amount of caution is advisable. This explains why one finds just as many old campsites along the open, unprotected coast as in sheltered places farther back. An obvious preference is

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•361 given to quiet bays and a coastline made safe by islands lying in front of it. Here, too, however, no one escapes all the hardships of the fickle weather (29) because the huts themselves are only frail

29. In this connection Dove (c) :187 writes: "Their miserable huts are usually placed on the inner side of the little bays that cut deep into Tierra del Fuego. Even though these afford them some protection against the weather, it nevertheless happens that the poor occupants are half buried in snow the next morning or half drowned by rain."

structures. These statements will explain the phenomenon, surprising to some Europeans, that today throughout the entire Yamana region one finds traces of former campsites at every turn.

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484 A family is no more independent in choosing the length of time they may stay in one place than it is in choosing a campsite. Journeys overland are not undertaken, if only because it is not easy to drag the canoe along. On journeys by water, wind and weather determine the direction or make progress impossible. Sometimes /381/ these people cannot leave their camp for days because of the unremitting disturbances of nature, and they are then powerless to undertake anything even if they are tormented by hunger. If, as a result of threatening danger, they have been obliged to land quickly at a random spot, their lot may be only boggy clods of earth or water-soaked ground (30) which they can escape only when the weather

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30. Hyades (f) :557 observed: "The earth is so wet that often water runs off if one merely exerts a little pressure on the ground, and the natives are sometimes forced to make a ditch across the middle of the hut for drainage" /translated from French/.

grows calm. Thus, the restlessness of their nomadic life is very often linked with danger and considerable renunciation or even the abandonment of the most modest demands of human well-being. The stable dwelling, however, erected for a sojourn of several days at a suitable place that has been freely chosen, does offer some minor conveniences.

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342 of the former dwellings, which was scarcely worth mentioning, since at present the Indians do not take the trouble to dry a few seal skins and stretch them over the framework. Instead they procure /390/ light tacking which lets in rain and snow and hardly keeps off some of the wind (47). Complete barren and desolate

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47. Lathrop (b) :128 gives a similar judgment: "Thus housed they have had immeasurably poorer protection from the weather than in the days when hunger drove them to secure many seals and consequently many seal-skins were available for hometops" /cited in English/.

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indolence have so completely alienated the last survivors of the race from the industry of their fathers that even the most distressing inclemency of the weather no longer wins them from their state of lazy immobility. A few families have built small, very simple wooden houses, European style, in Puerto Mejillones (48).

48. They obtain the raw materials for these houses through their work as day laborers or as gifts (p. 367 /untranslated/). According to Lathrop (b) :129, "the material for their construction was begged, stolen, or picked up on the beach" /cited in English/.

but they spend only a small part of the year in them. They, too, travel about for weeks in their canoe looking for food, and meanwhile content themselves with a cover of tacking on the cone-shaped framework of their flimsy hut.

4. The Community Camp

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The Yamana do not have permanent settlements in one place. There are a few occasions, however, when many families come together and remain in one place for a longer period of time. If a whale is stranded, people come from a great distance, and the

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- 36 many but beside a dead tree cluster create the illusion of a village. Since there is plenty of meat and fat, a number of families can settle down together without hindrance. If during this time someone must obtain some vital necessity, he departs for a few days, but leaves his hut standing and occupies it again upon his return. There is no food supply more abundant and convenient than a stranded whale. At the same time the gathering of many families satisfies the need for sociability, and the people can give themselves up to it all the more undisturbed the longer they are free from worry about the necessities of life. Naturally the large number of people and their freedom from the food quest suggest stimulating diversion, and this is offered principally by the gigags and the accompanying bliss. In comparison with these protracted events, fewer families gather together for funeral rites, and they remain in one place a much shorter time, often only a day or two.

No matter what brings families together, they always preserve their independence. Groups of relatives and friends erect their huts close together, but there is always a space of a few steps between them. In spite of intimacy with neighbors, everyone craves for at least a small space between dwellings. The /391/ distribution of huts in such a camp is very irregular, because each individual makes his arrangement for his own greatest convenience. He first selects for his dwelling any spot and the protection of a rock or a group of trees. Drinking water must be not too far away. Whoever is first to appear on the scene has a greater freedom of selection, and the stragglers are content to take the places that have been left vacant. No one is a right and would not presume to exercise any kind of influence on the distribution of the huts. A person who wishes to leave the settlement can depart or return unhindered, just as he likes. On an occasion two or at most three families may share a single hut if they are close to each other, such as brothers and sisters or true friends, but such exceptions are rare. In that case they build the ordinary dome-shaped family-hut in larger proportions, not the so-called winter hut (p. 33).

Everyone, of course, is completely free to dispose of his time as he sees fit. The greater part of the day is spent in talk and conversation. During the long evenings they like to recite the old legends and tell of their own experiences. One often sees the men

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G. The Shell Heaps

172 Throughout the region of the Yamana there are mound-shaped accumulations of mussel shells, varying in height and length. It is unimportant whether or not they are designated as actual kitchen middens. Whether they can raise any claims to being deposits of archaeological finds is uncertain (389). Of real factual value is

389. Cooper:218 prefers to avoid this conception, for "it may be a little inaccurate to use this heading archaeology in the case of the meager remains obtained from Fuegia graves and middens" /cited in English/. South American observers use the terms "Conchales" and "Kjökkenmøddinger" somewhat indiscriminately.

a detailed description of the site of these shell heaps and all the implements that are preserved in their various layers. This shows without any doubt that the former way of living, insofar as it can be recognized from these deposits, coincides in general and in detail with the present form and that the people of those times and of the present day belong to the same race.

1. Their Arrangement

In this description we shall include not only the few very large shell heaps that were built up in isolated places, but also the insignificant dwelling sites which were still used during the last decade. /597/ The fact that Indian families built their huts on them up to the present time points definitely and clearly to the similarity of living habits between then and now (Fig. 70).

172 It is very easy for any traveler to establish the fact that there
361 are shell heaps to be found in all parts of the Cape Horn Archipelago. They reveal certain differences, however. In general they are not as large and extensive in the west as in the east, for obvious reasons. Except for inlets, large and small, the western

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shores are everywhere steep, although they are not always very high. /Fig. 70 appears here./ Hence the Indians could build their huts only in places with a very low, flat, and usually narrow shore-line. Whatever they left behind was washed away by temporary high tides. Afterwards the shingle revealed hardly any traces of the fact that shortly before one or more families had camped there. In inlets with sloping and wide shores, accumulations of food remains are not entirely lacking even in the west, as I myself have seen in different places. They are limited in extent, however, by the rock walls which are close together and rise steeply. Since these heaps are sometimes crowded against the rock walls, a thick layer of earth washed down by the rain covers them in the course of time. Some of them are entirely covered and can be seen only



Fig. 70. Oldest Representation of a Shell Heap.

by the careful observer. In contrast to this, the eastern half of the Cape Horn Archipelago has many wide beaches. Whatever piled up and accumulated here remained almost intact and the amount of it gives the present-day visitor food for thought. The fact that in the formation of the shell heaps in the east and west there was a slight difference in diet will soon be discussed.

To begin with, we cannot expect that those deposits extend uninterruptedly along the entire shore-line. We find them only /598/ here and there. Moreover, it is obvious that whole hills have been formed in sheltered places that offered greater security and quiet for a dwelling, whereas on the exposed beach the deposits were extensive but low. It was the desirability of the

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one alone that was more or less attractive and invited more or fewer families to settle there, by no means the greater supply of mussels in one place or another (297). The shells themselves were

290. Lushup (p. 178) confirms that the heaps of refuse "are found in sheltered places, where there is a beach for landing, help off-shore for mooring canoes, and where water and firewood are readily available" /cited in English/. Compare also the geographic distribution of shell heaps in Furlong (p. 180). Vignati (p. 65) has indicated on a special map the "Conchales" at Uhuais and on the eastern coast of Isla Grande.

gathered not only at the place where today large amounts of refuse are lying, but many were also brought along to the place where the hut was to be erected, and the people often went great distances from it looking for mussels if they wished to stay longer at the same spot. The bays and hidden inlets in favorable locations were regarded and are today still regarded as favorite spots by many families. They not only frequently returned to such places, but remained in them longer than elsewhere. One was safe there from the strength of the winds and also found a flat shore-line on which to pull up the canoe. Moreover, firewood and drinking water were easily available. The cup of benefits was filled if the outlying sea floor was shallow and considerably facilitated occasional fishing.

The shores of Bahía Harberton and their environs were an advantageous spot from every standpoint. A few huge mounds are to be found on Gable Island opposite it, and Tierra Mayor, and there are two more in Puerto Róbaló, which are far surpassed in size by those in Puerto Mejillones. Less extensive than the latter are those that I saw on Pictón Island and in Puerto Rosa, Puerto Piedra, Wulaia, at the mouth of the Rio Douglas, and in Uhuais Bay.

All this explains the differences in length and height of the shell heaps, kusimépa, but in their formation they are completely uniform. All of them form a low, gently sloping, more

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for the moment, and if they are dispersed on a lonely coast and do not happen to be noticed by others, they are in danger of starving to death.* Such rare accidents, however, do not in the least weaken the brilliant record of the seamanship of the Indian whalers.

2. On Land

We are justified in saying that the Foulon's principal field of action is the sea, for on land he makes only a temporary brief halt here and there. He never settles anywhere for a long stay. /511/ Soon after landing, the man, aided by his wife and children, builds a simple, loosely constructed hut or only a meager protection against the weather and the rigors of the night. If adverse natural forces do not prevent it, the family usually travels on the next day or the day after. The sojourn on land is for rest and certain manual work. After the day's trip the women, especially, need adequate rest, but the man no less, for he is sometimes very agitated and active while hunting and does not feel his great exhaustion until later. Sometimes both husband and wife must exert all their skill for hours to combat headwinds and counter-currents until landing is possible. They expend all their strength doing this and need two or three days before they dare venture out to sea again. On shore, the man makes the tools he needs; however, in this occupation he is never tied down to a certain place. He works here and there on the same piece until it is finished, even though he has to load and unload it, unfinished, 20 times. Similarly, the woman performs all her manual work on land and combs the vicinity of the hut for mussels and snails, fungi and berries.

221 In its ceaseless crisscross journeys, the family follows a certain plan dictated by the prospect of success in food-seeking. In general a family travels far more in summer than in winter, even though unfavorable weather is more predominant (p. 24 /untranslated/) (433). In summer they have a larger selection of animals

433. Without giving this as a reason, Bridges (VSA:XIII, 207:1866) simply says:

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It is easy to recognize the *overman* who could not officially when he addresses the customary admonitions to the candidates *cautellado* about him. This is also his duty, he must at least see to it that these admonitions are given the candidates by other persons, whether men or women. The precept becomes much more emphatic if they are given in this altogether formal manner. The admonitions that every adult repeatedly gives any one of the candidates is entirely an individual matter.

The Yaguajay always see to it that both offices, that of leader and that of *overman*, are filled. External necessity makes it imperative, quite apart from the above-mentioned subjective reason. The leader more than the *overman* might be prevented on a given day from fulfilling the duty incumbent upon him. It does not matter if one *[1928]* of them temporarily drops out, for the other one will replace him without much ado, and the ceremony continues uninterrupted. The organization of these two offices rests on a great deal of experience; a man in his best years will first learn to take over the leadership under the supervision of a practical, dedicated old man who is alert to the preservation of ancient tradition.

At my first initiation old Alfredo was the leader, and Whaitis, who was still older, was the *overman*; afterwards Santiago filled the former office and Pedro the latter. As a result of this sharing of offices, there is never a lack of men who are capable of filling one or the other.

♂. The Place of Assembly

Frequently the external circumstance that causes many families to come together also determines the place where the initiation is held. If they are not otherwise influenced, the people of a local group will decide on the spot where they previously held their ceremony. In the two successive years 1921 and 1922 the Yaguajay went to Puerto Mejillones for the *Yaguajay*, and they used the same Great Hut both times. Thus they are not absolutely dependent on a particular region, nor can they be, since the dialect groups at least prefer to celebrate this festival within their own

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territory. Thus they isolate themselves from one another to a certain extent, and slight differences and local peculiarities of this ceremony have arisen in one region or another.

Although the geographical location does not matter, the place must fulfill certain conditions. Today, and sometimes formerly, the Great Hut is hidden from the eyes of the curious. Europeans especially are regarded as such, as well as the neighboring Halakwulup and Selk'nam. They like to choose an island or an inlet that is seldom visited. The Great Hut is built at the edge of the forest or near a wall or rock, so that it is inconspicuous and, in addition, blends into the landscape. The ground on which it is placed must be as dry as possible, that is, it must be gravel or shingle, for clayey earth, with all the people walking on it, would become a morass beyond all description. Furthermore, the place must be well protected against the buffeting of heavy winds and rain. If rain leaked in at too many spots, or smoke blew around inside as a result of repeated gusts of wind, many of the people would find it impossible to protect themselves. The Great Hut is always crowded, and disturbances of the strict proceedings must be avoided.

Moreover, the Yamana have a few other unavoidable requirements for the site of the Great Hut. Firewood must be available nearby, and there must be quantities of it, for during the long ceremony /831/ the numerous participants use a great deal. There must be a brook not too far off, for the Indians drink a great deal of water and it would be burdensome to go a long way for it. Finally, whatever else the place may offer the coasts of the vicinity must be provided with quantities of mussels because these are needed every day.

There is a great deal of preliminary calculation and reconnoitering before the men in-charge decide on a particular place of assembly. Aside from the work required to build a new Great Hut, a move is always regarded as disturbing and uncomfortable and is avoided from the outset, if possible. If they have a completely free choice, they assemble in a place that has already proved suitable in former years. It is taken for granted that the availability of food is always a decisive factor; half a hundred persons

381 /832 cont. /

or more need very considerable amounts for a period of several weeks. They are also looking for a certain amount of comfort, and the adults wish to relax a bit from all their exertions and restrictions.

The long-range preparation is, as we see, an important matter requiring long discussions and much prudence. Yet, faster than one would think possible, the Yamana come to agreement about their significant youth initiation. The younger people listen to the older ones submissively and with respect; the latter have had so much experience that, under the circumstances, their decision could hardly be better.

3. More Immediate Preparation

381 Assuming that many families have gathered in one place for a particular purpose and that the place is suitable for the xiéxau ceremony, it is not necessary for the entire camp to move. The situation is different if the families must gather at a suitable place. Then the leader determines the move, and he and his family are usually the first to go there so that the others will follow his example.

Almost always the leader also sends some messenger to his circle of kinsmen and the members of the local group to call attention to the beginning of the performance and also to extend a particularly cordial invitation to certain families. It is a matter of pride for the leader to have a "full house," hence his effort beforehand, and also later, to assemble as many people as possible.

Consideration is given also to the space that must be provided for the number of participants who have announced their coming or may be expected. After all, it must not be too crowded in the Great Hut because that would hinder certain games and dances. One cannot, of course, count on a prior acceptance by some families, and the overseer does not know definitely how many participants will come until all of them /832/ have actually set up their huts nearby. Frequently the individual families must come from different directions, and in spite of their best intentions, they are only too often and too long delayed by bad weather.

Everyone arrives in good humor and a suitable frame of mind. The xiéxau offers so much stimulation for every aspect of the inner

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has been obtained as the leader, he exercises his own power of attraction. Thus, many families wait for definite instructions, according to which they will remain where they are or travel to another place.

The leader, of course, has the decisive word; he uses his own judgment to determine when the proper moment has come for the move and when the more immediate preparations must begin. He perhaps delays the decision until the arrival of a good friend who is reliably informed about the whole procedure of the festival and who is often consulted. A few other experienced old men gather around this leader and influence and advise him without any kind of importunity. The kina tagiguwa makes his arrangements with the good-natured agreement of the older men, and the younger men comply without opposition. This explains the unobtrusive beginning and the smooth course of the whole affair, and, above all, the genial, jolly mood of the participants during the whole period.

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361 They do or do not move to a special place, depending on the external reasons that led to the decision to celebrate the Kina. It depends on the given locality in which the families have been camping. Certain conditions are demanded. The Kina hut must /1323/ stand on open land and on a slight rise so that the spirits appearing in front of the hut can easily be seen by the women and children who have remained behind in the dwellings. The open place itself must be as level as possible so that the men do not risk stumbling or falling while dancing. Of course, certain general conditions for a longer stay must also be fulfilled, namely, the availability of drinking water and firewood in the immediate vicinity, the convenience of getting food, and the complete lack of disturbance by strangers and curiosity-seekers. There are not many places on the Cape Horn Archipelago that meet these vital demands. A group of families prefers to meet at a place that has previously proved favorable for a Kina. The leader decides whether the people who happen to be settled at a certain place may stay there and simply move their huts a bit or whether a general move to a distant place is necessary. Everyone follows his instructions.

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361 /1323 cont. /

Not only must the Kina hut be erected on a favorable spot and on a slight rise in the ground, but the dwellings of the individual families must also be moved together in a certain arrangement and be set up in such a way that they are not within range of the wide entrance to the Kina hut. The dwellings are at least 55 meters away so that the conversation and activities of the men cannot be overheard or observed by the women and children. The elevation of the Kina hut permits the men to watch and follow every movement in the camp proper without undue effort and unobtrusively. Above all no intruder may approach their secret gathering-place (272). The closer the

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272. Basically, the local conditions here are the same as those required for the camp arrangement at the Kloketen celebration of the Selk'nam (Vol. I, 831). The gathering-place of the men is like the stage of a theater, with the dwellings in front and at a certain distance, as though they were the auditorium for the women and children.

dwellings are to one another, the easier it is to survey them from the Kina hut. For that reason persons who are closely related are definitely urged to move into the so-called multiple-family huts (p. 31). Two to four families thus live in the same room. This is not disturbing or uncomfortable for them because the men are almost always in the Kina hut.

4. Building the Great Hut

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345 Scarcely have the families settled in the place assigned to them when the building of the Great Hut commences, following the request and directions of the leader. Middle-aged men willingly offer their services. First of all the chosen site on a slight rise is cleared of stones, low bushes, and many a /1324/ tree stump. If necessary it is also leveled off somewhat. The women and children may watch this work from their dwellings; from now on they may come no closer.

THE YAHGAN

By JOHN M. COOPER

INTRODUCTION

133 Natural environment.—The Yahgan habitat is archipelagic, the mountainous islands constituting the last outposts of the Andean chain before it dips beneath the sea at Cape Horn (map 1, No. 1A; map 2).¹ Atmospheric temperatures at sea level differ somewhat from locality to locality, with a summer mean around 50° F., a winter mean close to the freezing point, and a winter minimum around 10° F. Snowfalls not infrequently occur even in the summer months (pl. 35). Relatively very cold or very warm spells are usually of short duration. Sudden changes in temperature, in wind velocity, and in sunshine, cloudiness, and precipitation are characteristic. Violent squalls and strong gales are common.

137 The islands up to about 1,500 feet altitude are heavily wooded, chiefly with beeches (*Nothofagus betuloides* and *N. cumillo*, evergreens; *N. antarctica*, deciduous), together with Winter's bark (*Drimys winteri*), "cypress" (*Libocedrus tetragona*), and leña dura (*Maytenus magellanica*). The forest floor is thickly covered with rotting and rotten fallen trunks, which with the thick spiny masses of barberry bushes (*Berberis ilicifolia* and *B. buxifolia*) and holly (*Pernettya mucronata*) make travel through the woods extremely

136 slow and difficult. Foxes and rats, the land mammals that could have helped in the Yahgan dietary, were eschewed. Marine mam-

132 mals, fish, and other sea food were abundant in most localities. As a result of the foregoing conditions, the Yahgan lived mostly on the water and along the shore line, penetrating inland very little.

131 Territory.—In the last century and probably from much earlier times the Yahgan regularly occupied the southern coast of Tierra del Fuego Island from about the eastern end of Beagle Channel to Brecknock Peninsula, and the islands south of this line to Cape Horn. But they evidently wandered more widely; Yahgan house sites and implements have been found as far north as Elizabeth Island in the Strait of Magellan (Bird, 1938, p. 260). Between Good Success Bay and the eastern end of Beagle Channel, there was considerable

¹ [These maps have not been processed; see source 1: Gusinde, category 116, and maps, for similar information--analyst]

262 Lothrop (1928, p. 39) rated the relative importance in the *Yahgan* dietary of their foods as follows: (1) Easily of first importance, mussels; (2) next, seals, and fish of many kinds; (3) next, porpoises, gulls, and bird eggs; (4) then, whales, limpets, crabs, sea urchins, geese, penguins, cormorants; (5) last and least, otter (chiefly in the west), guanaco (only in the east), conchs, ducks, berries (especially wild black currants). The fungi eaten were those growing on trees; those growing on the ground were not eaten. Some wild celery and wild parsnips and two varieties of cress and young shoots of tussock grass were also eaten. Foxes were eaten only in famine as a last resort. Salt was not used.

225 Hunting.—Seals were hunted with spear or harpoon from canoes or from land (pl. 36), or killed with clubs. Whales were occasionally hunted in the open sea with spear or harpoon; stranded or dead whales were eagerly exploited. Dogs helped in otter and fox hunting.

223 Cormorants were taken at night by torchlight with clubs; also with a pronged wooden gorge hook. Birds were taken with pole snares (fig. 11, d) and with single or multiple tether snares of sinew or whalebone. No lifting pole snares, deadfalls, or pitfalls are reported.

226 Fishing and sea-food gathering.—Mussels were gathered by hand; limpets, with a flat-ended stick; sea urchins, with a four-pronged wooden fork; crabs and other Crustacea, with a harpoon or a three-pronged stick. For taking sea food, the *Yahgan* also used a spear with two diverging shanks, or two to four spears lashed together. Women fished with a kelp-stem or braided whale-sinew line, that had a slipknot of whalebone or of quill at the end, instead of a hook, to hold the bait; slowly drawing the fish to the surface, they would grab it by hand. Fishhooks were probably lacking. Weirs of branches or stakes were used. True fish nets were absent. The nearest approach thereto was a small basket attached to the end of a pole and used as a sort of dip net for diminutive fish.

251 Food storage.—Limited quantities of dried tree fungi were stored; so too was oil, especially whale and seal oil.

415 Food preparation and eating.—Large mussel shells were used for melting fat and holding grease. Water was heated and grease melted by throwing hot stones into them, but there is no record of stone boiling proper.

252 Shells of large mussels were sometimes used as plates; shells or bark buckets as cups; hollow bird bones or reeds as drinking tubes.

CAMPS AND SHELTERS

361 There were no permanent villages. Certain groups of natives related apparently by blood and marriage frequented and occupied more or less fixed separate localities within the respective five sub-

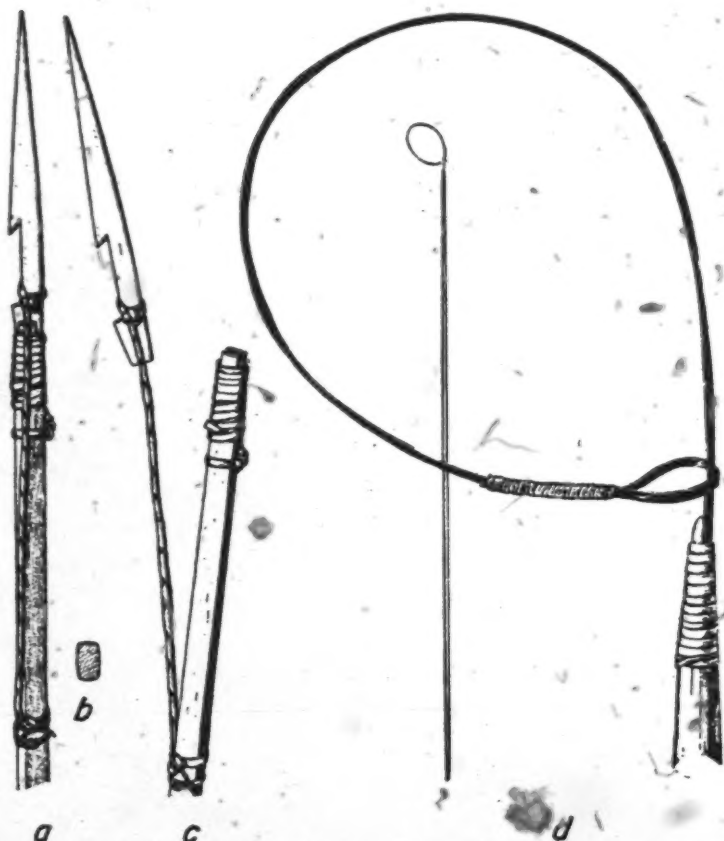
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FIGURE 11.—Yahgan harpoon and pole snare. *a*, Harpoon assembled for casting; *b*, cross section of harpoon shaft; *c*, position when dragging through water (length of harpoon head 10 in., or 25.4 cm.); *d*, two views of bird snare (diameter of loop $6\frac{1}{4}$ in., or 16.5 cm.). (After Lothrop, 1928, figs. 82, 87.)

361 divisional areas. Apart from initiation and other social or religious
621 functions, which brought larger numbers together temporarily in a
common camp, each biological family or small group of two or three
families tended to camp apart, more frequently in the same shelter.

342 The two chief forms of family shelter were the beehive hut and
the conical hut. The beehive or domed hut, the more common form,
especially in the west, was circular or elliptical in ground plan,
made of a framework of flexible sticks bent over dome-shape and
fastened together, and covered with grass, ferns, branches, bark,
skins, or anything at hand (pl. 33, *b*). The conical hut, more fre-

172 approximately sixteen miles. Fresh water flows into all of these bays and is found in a pond on Cambaceres peninsula behind middens 29, 30, and 31; small springs are encountered in several places. Firewood is obtainable anywhere except on the marshes flanking the Varela river. Shellfish abound everywhere except in the upper part of Imiwaia bay. Excellent shelter in case of storms is amply provided, and, except in the roughest weather, it is possible to round the various peninsulas in a canoe owing to the heavy bands of kelp that encompass them off-shore. It is an ideal region for a people materially equipped to face life as were the Yahgan.

172 The number of house-pits counted—1215—indicates that the
361 Yahgan fully appreciated the advantages of the district. The size of each individual camp-site is shown in the following table:

TABLE VI.—YAHGAN CAMP-SITES AND HUTS
NEAR HARBERTON

CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS	CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS
1	12	27	16+
2	35+	28	22+
3	2	29	26
4	40+	30	75
5	50+	31	114+
6	12	32	5
7	31	33	8+
8	8	34	14
9	2	35	22+
10	43	36	6
11	50+	37	5
12	5	38	5
13	43	39	10+
14	7	40	11
15	25	41	25+
16	18	42	9
17	67	43	14
18	15	44	28
19	2	45	27
20	10	46	6
21	9	47	13
22	130+	48	13
23	13	49	4
24	15	50	25+
25	21	51	8
26	35+	52	4
		Total Average	1215+ 23+

172 The densest population in this group centered on Cambaceres
 361 bay, where 367 hut-pits were counted. The camp-sites on the
 south side, known to the Indians as Wikirh, display unusually
 deep house-pits, while Lanáshwala (pl. xvii, b) on the opposite

[102
 103]

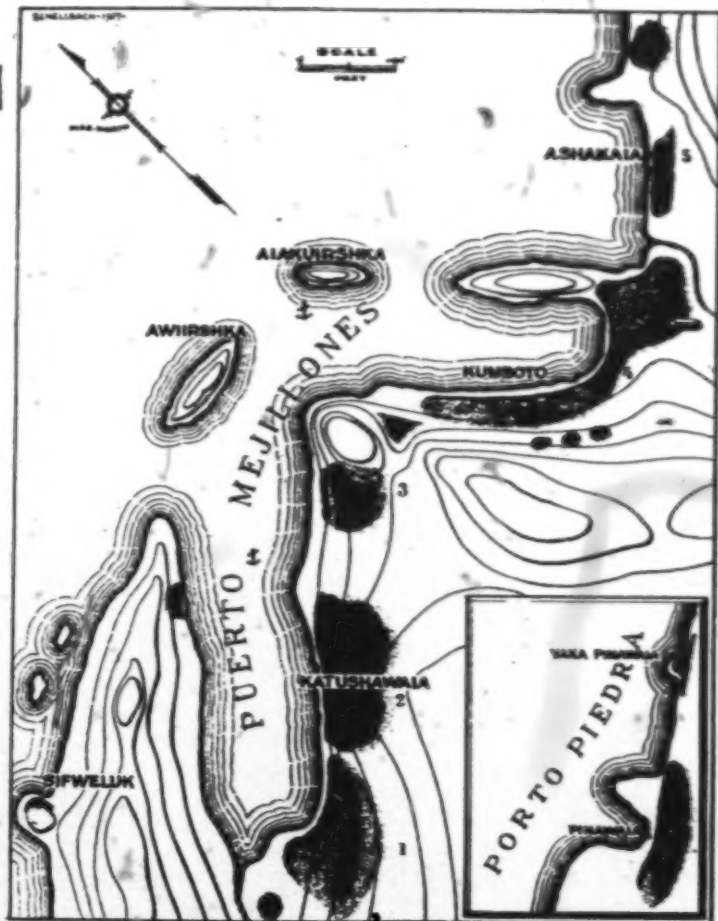


FIG. 101.—Puerto Mejillones and Porto Piedra shellheaps, Navarin island.

shore was evidently a later or less popular settlement, as the pits are relatively shallow.

731 About 1880 there occurred here one of those tragedies which must have been not uncommon among the Yahgan. A dead

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whale floated ashore, and Oua and Haush came to join the local Yahgan in the ensuing feast. But all were poisoned by the meat and most of the company died—so many indeed that the survivors fled, leaving the bones of their relatives to whiten the beach for many years afterward.

Imiwaia bay (pl. III, lower) is completely landlocked and the tide runs strongly through the narrow entrance. Hence it is not readily accessible. The large heap No. 22 (Landshwafa) backs on it, but the principal access to this camp must have been from the Cambaceres side. In the northwest corner, however, there is a large and very deep midden (No. 17), of which we give a section in fig. 99. This is conveniently situated beside a small stream, and its approach from the entrance channel is sheltered from the prevailing westerly winds. Heap 51, on the north shore, was evidently abandoned long ago, as large beech-trees had grown on top of the refuse—the only case of this kind observed by the writer. The upper end of Imiwaia bay is shallow and muddy, and not suited for camp-sites.

Harberton bay, the headquarters of the Bridges' sheep ranches on the south coast, is ideally suited for camp-sites, and no fewer than fifteen were inspected. Of these, No. 2, which has been described above (page 181), and Nos. 4, 5, 11, and 13, are large and important. No. 6 was occupied by Indians in the summer of 1923-24. This bay well illustrates the Yahgan tendency to give every few hundred yards of coast-line a separate name.

The Thouctof bay middens, although numerous, are for the greater part small, and offer no peculiarities.

The other groups of shellheaps examined offer in no material way from the Harberton cluster. In fig. 100 we show the settlements along the channel between Tierra Mayor and Gable island, a sheltered, well-watered, and well-wooded region, which affords a convenient resting place at the end of an exposed strip of coast to the westward. The size of some of the middens is as follows:

CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS	CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS
4	6	9	8
5	34	10	40
6	7	11	12
7	1	12	8
8	8	13	12

172
361 Of these, No. 4 was occupied by the Yahgan during the summer of 1923-24. No. 10, seen in pl. XVI (upper view), was an unusually deep midden conveniently situated beside a spring.

Another group of Yahgan camp-sites, at Puerto Mejillones and at Porto Piedra along the coast to the westward, is seen in pl. XI and mapped in fig. 101. Here practically all the Yahgan now come to pass the winter months, living on the proceeds of the skins they have sold during the preceding summer or on their wages earned on various sheep ranches. They dwell in poorly constructed houses built of ill-fitting boards. The size of the shellheaps is as follows:

CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS	CAMP-SITE	NUMBER OF HUTS
1	55	5	20
2	50	—	6
3	25	Pinawafa	75
4	10	Yaka Pinawafa	12

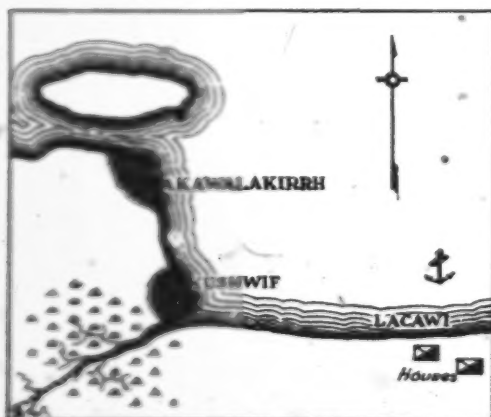


FIG. 102.—Róbalo bay, Navarin island, showing the location of shellheaps.

One of the Porto Piedra shellheaps is of unusual size. This site today is crowned by several modern houses and the house-pits have been trampled down by cattle.

172 At Róbalo bay of Navarin island are two large shellheaps containing 43 and 56 house-sites. The one called Akawalakirrh in

Puerto Mejillones really is one continuous site, and the original number of house-pits was much greater than that given above, but they have been trampled flat by cattle. The greatest depth of deposit was seen at site 2, where the débris appeared to be 12 or 15 feet thick (pls. XI, XVIII).